Indo-Russian Joint Working Group

1040. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Russia held 1 st Joint Working Group meet on global challenges at New Delhi recently;

(b) if so, the points discussed; and

(c) by when the next meeting will take place?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes.

(b) In the discussions held during the meeting of the Joint Working Group on Group on Global Challenges in New Delhi on 13th October, 2003, India and Russia exchanged views on a wide range of international issues. These included the situation in Iraq, the role of the United Nations, the situation in Afghanistan and Central Asia, the threat of international terrorism and phenomena related to it such as illicit drug and arms trafficking, organized crime, money laundering and the possibility of weapons of mass destruction falling into hands of terrorists.

(c) The next meeting of the Joint Working Group is to be held in Moscow in the spring of 2004, on mutually convenient dates.

Invitation to India from OIC

1041. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken note of Communique of the OIC Summit in October, 2003 and of the fact that several non-member States were invited to participate in the event;

(b) whether India with the second biggest Muslim Community in the World was also invited;

(c) if so, the reasons for not accepting the invitation; and

(d) if not, whether it was a deliberate omission or it was engineered by hostile States which are members of the OIC?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) India is neither a member nor an aspirant for admission to the OIC and has not applied for any status with this Organisation. During earlier OIC sessions some member countries had suggested an Observer Status for India and the issue could be considered at an appropriate time in future. India maintains excellent bilateral relations with most OIC member countries.

Sexual harassment of women workers

1042. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether many women workers in the country face sexual harassment to some extent at their place of work;

(b) if so, the number of cases reported in this regard during the last three years;

(c) what steps Government propose to take to ensure their safety at their place of work; and

(d) what penalties Government propose to introduce if cases of sexual harassment are reported from the Central Government Offices?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI SAHIB SINGH VERMA): (a) and (b) The Government does not receive complaints directly as these are to be dealt with by Complaints Committees constituted by the employers at their respective workplaces.

(c) A Statement is annexed (See below).

(d) Sexual harassment constitutes a misconduct under Central Civil Service (Conduct Rules), 1964 and penalties prescribed under